



HOMELAND SECURITY COMMITTEE

Statement of Subcommittee Chairman Dan Donovan (R-NY) Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness, Response, and Communications

“How Effective is the Science and Technology Directorate? Stakeholder Perspectives.”

November 7, 2017

Remarks as Prepared

I want to welcome our witnesses here today to discuss an issue that is important to our homeland security: the role of the Science and Technology Directorate (S&T) within the Department of Homeland Security and the Homeland Security Enterprise.

S&T, by law, is the primary research and development (R&D) arm of the Department. However, it seems that over fifteen years since its creation, S&T is still struggling to fulfill its role within DHS and the Homeland Security Enterprise.

Given the evolving threat we face from terrorist attacks, like last week’s attack in New York City, to powerful hurricanes and expansive wildfires, we need to ensure that there is a component or office at the Department looking for both the short-term and long-term innovated solutions to address the challenges the nation is currently faces. By design, this should be S&T.

However, budget constraints and the changes to R&D priorities have restricted S&T abilities to meet its mission. The Committee has heard concerns about the lack coordination between S&T and other DHS components and offices on R&D. Additionally, in the past, it was unclear how S&T prioritized its R&D. In 2015, DHS reinstituted the Integrated Product Teams (IPTs) process. These teams, comprised of a cross-section of DHS components and offices, identify capability gaps which directs S&T R&D priorities. This is a step in the right direction, but more still needs to be done.

I am troubled that S&T has repeatedly changed its focus – both on whether to focus on short-term technology transferring or longer-term research on larger unknown threats and whether to deal only with DHS components or external stakeholders. This back and forth needs to stop and there needs to be candid conversations on what S&T’s mission should be. I hope this hearing is just the start of these conversations. Moving forward, this Subcommittee is committed to working with all relevant stakeholders as we consider the appropriate mission and structure of S&T.

While S&T has faced constant challenges and obstacles, there are some S&T programs that have made a positive impact on the Homeland Security Enterprise.

The National Urban Security Technology Laboratory (NUSTL, pronounced “New Steel”), in New York City, serves as a federal resource for first responders by supporting the development and testing and evaluation of new technology. I’ve had the opportunity to visit NUSTL and see firsthand the

remarkable resources NUSTL provides to our first responders. I was very concerned that the President's Fiscal Year 2018 budget request proposed its closure in addition to two other DHS' labs that focus on the chemical and biological threats. Now is not the time to be cutting federal resources to counter chemical and biological threats and support for our first responders. I'm pleased that the gentlemen from Maryland, Mr. Delaney, and I were able to successfully restore funding for these three vital labs during the appropriations process on the House floor.

I'm looking forward to hearing from our witnesses on the current state of S&T and its programs and what more needs to be done to ensure S&T is an effective and efficient partner with first responders, academia, and industry as well as DHS components and offices. I look forward to our discussion.

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